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Re:	Interview	**CC:**	

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Comments: **DRAFT CLAIMS FOR INTERVIEW SCHEDULED FOR TUESDAY, JUNE 8, 2004 @ 10:30AM**

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DRAFT CLAIMS

1. *(Currently Amended)* A method for packaging a product in a hermetically sealed container having a cup-shaped rigid or semi-rigid body provided with a rim fitted with solely a single closure, the method comprising:

a) introducing the product into said cup-like shaped body;

b) placing the container into a holder beneath and concentrically with a central opening of a spacer member;

c) providing above the rim solely a single flat, flexible closure-forming, gas-impermeable membrane, said membrane extending between the spacer member and a pressing plate;

d) relative ~~vertical displacement~~vertically displacing [of] the holder and the spacer member without displacing the membrane so as to form proximate to the rim a confined space, said space having at least one gas inlet and at least one gas outlet, said space being defined by an upper part of the container body, by the closure-forming membrane, by an inwardly facing surface of the central opening and by a peripheral portion of the holder, said confined space being formed adjacent to the rim and at a distance therefrom;

e) introducing ~~a~~an inert replacement gas through said inlet into said confined space in order to expel from the container body ~~to replace~~ at least a substantial portion of gas

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originally contained in the container body and replace it with an inert replacement gas;

f) ~~displacement~~displacing [of] said container body ~~pressing place other~~ further to bring the closure-forming membrane in contact with said rim; and

g) hermetically attaching the membrane to the rim to form a gas-tight seal therebetween.

7. (*Currently Amended*) An apparatus for forming a hermetically sealed product-containing container, the container having an essentially cup-like shaped body with a rim fitted with a closure; wherein said container is not filled entirely by the product such that a residual space remains between the product and the rim; the apparatus comprising:

- a holder for holding said container body;
- a spacer member, having a central opening,
- ~~a~~ means for bringing the spacer member into sealing engagement against the holder and against solely a single flat flexible closure-forming substantially gas-impermeable membrane, the arrangement being such that when the spacer member is brought into ~~in the sate of~~ sealing engagement the inwardly facing wall of said central opening, the container body, a peripheral portion of the holder and the closure-forming

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membrane, define together a confined space, said space is located adjacent to the rim and at a distance therefrom;

- at least one gas inlet and at least one gas outlet for introducing ~~a~~an inert replacement gas into said confined space, and replacing at least a substantial portion of gas originally contained in the container body;

- a sealing mechanism comprising a displacing arrangement for displacing one or both of said container body and said flexible closure-forming membrane towards one another and attaching them to one another in a gas-tight fashion.

17. *(New)* The method according to claim 1 wherein the inert gas is nitrogen or carbon dioxide.

18. *(New)* The apparatus according to claim 7 wherein the inert gas is nitrogen or carbon dioxide.